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Sent: Friday, May 23, 2025 2:35 PM
Subject: Student Graduation Action

Greetings Department Chairs,

We, an organizing group of 20 seniors, hope you have been finding some warmth in these unseasonably chilly times.

Below you will find the email we just sent to the graduating class detailing our plans for an action at Commencement. We hope this serves as encouragement to join us and your fellow faculty in participating. If you feel comfortable, please share this with your department faculty and/or students.

With care and in solidarity,
An organized group seniors

Dear fellow seniors,

In this email you will find:

- The results of the graduation survey.
- An endorsement of specific student actions at graduation, along with our explanation for the endorsements.
- Instructions/recommendations for the endorsed actions.

The Survey Results

As of 9:30 pm on May 21st, 281 members of the class of 2025 and 2025.5 responded to the survey. Of these respondents, 230 are members of the class of 2025. This is 47% of the senior class, which is precisely the same turnout rate as this year's SGA election. This is an exceptional turnout rate, especially for such a short window of time.

For the full survey results please check out this link.

Several findings of note from the survey:

The overwhelming majority of students polled in this petition believe that:

1. **The faculty and staff benefits cuts actively harm our quality of education and the Board of Trustees must reverse them.**
2. **Chuck Davis as Commencement speaker does not reflect Middlebury's mission statement *and* students should have a participatory role in deciding both our student and Commencement speakers.**

The Actions

Pamphlet

Students will be handing out a pamphlet at the start of Commencement which situates the above issues within the Trump Administration's repressive agenda.

Walk-out

As you can see in the survey, more students said they would be willing to stand and turn their backs during speeches than said they would walk-out. **However**, we have since learned that Middlebury's AAUP chapter (American Association of University Professors) endorsed a faculty walk-out at graduation in which *at least* 50 faculty will participate. Therefore, in the interest of **a cohesive action,** both faculty and students will be protesting the Administration's unilateral decision-making on benefit cuts and speaker selections.

We, in collaboration with faculty, endorse a walk-out of graduation, returning to receive our diplomas.

This walk-out is **not** targeted specifically at any of the graduation speakers nor is it meant to inhibit the proceedings. Rather, it is a broader display of dissent toward the Middlebury Administration and Board of Trustees who refuse to listen to students, faculty, and staff.

What will this look like

1. Before Commencement begins, while lining up for the procession behind Old Chapel: we suggest you talk with the students you will be sitting near (those directly in front and behind you in the procession line) and ask if they will be participating in the action. Also familiarize yourselves with each other, as knowing who you sit next to will make it easier to return to your seats.
2. Leaving: After the National Anthem, we will engage in a silent walkout as Interim President Snyder begins his remarks. Remember the row you are sitting in so that you may return to the correct seat. **As you are walking out, please remain calm and quiet and communicate with the people around you as necessary.** Walk the same way you entered (away from the stage), following the map (attached below) towards Old Chapel. We will be meeting the faculty in between Old Chapel and Davis. An map of this plan is attached to the email.
3. Standing: We will stand in between Old Chapel and Davis until the end of the Commencement Speech. While we are there, students will be able to **live stream the**

graduation from their phones at go/commencement/. This is especially important so that we may hear SGA President B Striker's speech. There will be snacks passed out at this point.

4. Returning: During Chuck Davis's speech we will line back up to re-enter Commencement. You will see students holding signs for the first few departments alphabetically. Please use these as guidance. We will then return to our seats in time to receive diplomas. Make sure to walk back in the same order you exited, so that you may sit in your correct seat. *Note: we will all have programs with the order our names are called, so if you get your seat a bit mixed up, that's ok, just look at the program!*

Planning on walking-out?
Reach out to the faculty who are important to you, let them know, and ask them what their plans are! Every department head will receive this email as well.

A note on disruption:
This is a very important day that we have all worked hard for. For many students, our family and loved ones have traveled from far away to celebrate us and our accomplishments. Alongside that truth is the reality that we *must* take this opportunity to demonstrate our dissent toward the Administration's and Board of Trustees' unilateral decision-making on these important matters. We hope that a display of collective action can be an opportunity to enhance the experience of this pivotal day, as we are reminded of what it means to stand together for what we know is right. **If you answered Yes to any of the questions on the survey, we call on you to walk-out with us.**

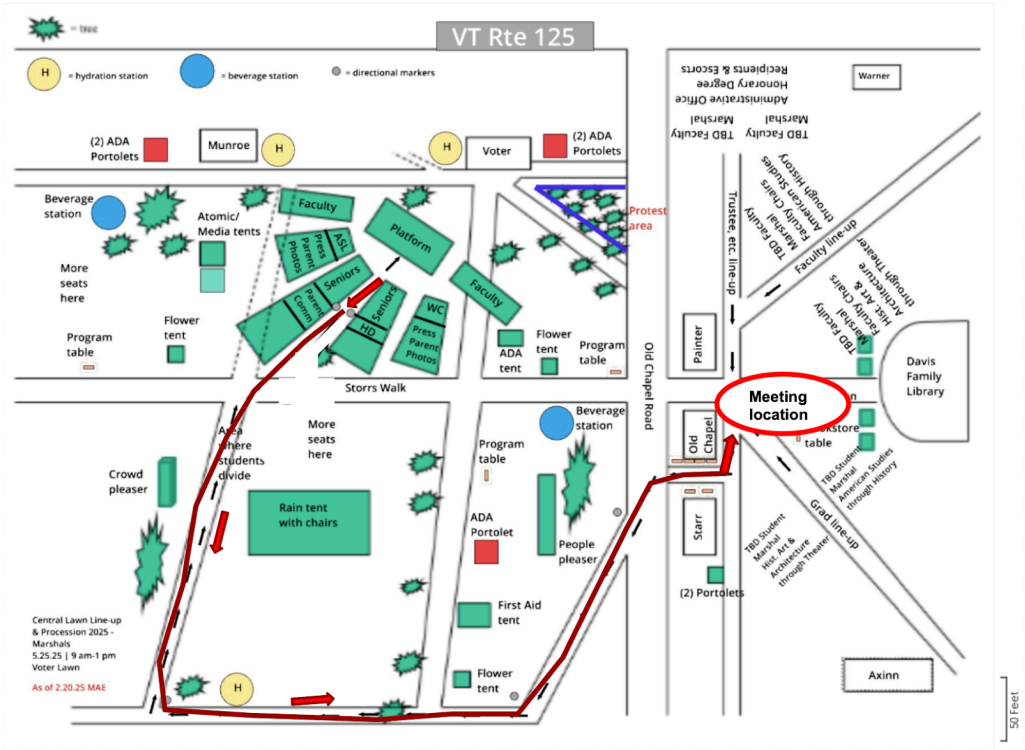
Plan for other potential actions:

- We are not officially organizing the singing of a song or chant. If you feel compelled to start either of these actions at any point, you of course have the freedom to do so!
- If you said you were interested in holding a sign or wearing/holding a symbol of solidarity/resistance, you should have received a separate email with further information about pick up. **If you would like to participate in this but have not yet received an email, please reply to this email.**
- We DO endorse handing Interim President Steve Snyder both the pamphlet as well as hand-held Palestinian flags. Both of these items will be available during the line-up on the morning of Commencement if you choose to do this action.

Interested in walking out but not sure what to say to your families about it? Please share with them this email as well as the survey results and direct them to the relevant Middlebury Campus newspaper articles. There is also an abundance of information from the faculty on the current moment at go/aaup/

Are you or your family concerned that you will not be able to walk back into graduation? Based on conversations with the Faculty Council, it is clear that it would be a *highly unprecedented* escalation for the college to deny re-entry to any graduate, especially since we will be walking out in collaboration with the faculty.

If you have any questions, please respond to this email, we will try to directly answer as

many as we can.

Sincerely,
Your classmates